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## PRACTICAL STATISTICS.

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*Practical Statistics: a Handbook for the use of the Statistician at Work, Students in Colleges and Academies, Agents, Census Enumerators, etc.* By Charles F. Pidgin, Chief Clerk of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor. Boston: The William E. Smythe Co. Pp. vi, 201.

The issue of a practical guide and handbook for use in statistical work is a hopeful sign; and its appearance in the United States is another illustration of the ingenious adaptability of the American character. There are now a number of statistical agencies of one sort or another in operation in the United States; some of these can point to useful service, and yet much of well-meant energy is wasted on account of poor organization, and faulty methods in the collection of material, in tabulation, and in the presentation of results. This work of Mr. Pidgin is designed to assist the active statistician, and more particularly those who direct investigations through the machinery of an official bureau. It is largely based upon the past experience of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics, and consequently presents methods which have approved themselves after fifteen years of careful testing. This Bureau has been fortunate in the possession of officers who have enjoyed a long tenure; their work, therefore, has been progressive and evolutionary rather than temporary and ill-defined. Mr. Pidgin's book is so minute and detailed in its information and suggestions that, with it as a guide, it is safe to say a statistical bureau might be organized, *ab initio*, and placed in running order with considerable prospect of success, even though the managers were untrained to the profession. Instruction is given in the preparation of schedules; the rules to be furnished to enumerators and agents, the examination of returns, and in tabulation. In many cases facsimiles of the blanks actually used are given. In reading these instructions, precise and detailed in all particulars, one is more than ever reminded of the absolute necessity of careful definition and plain speech in this department of work. In referring to the social statistics of the Massachusetts census of 1885, the author remarks that the only error that was made was caused by confounding lodgers and boarders! Again and again the enumerator is counselled that he cannot be too

explicit. The difficulties which meet the enumerator in the prosecution of his inquiries are taken up at length, and much excellent suggestion is given as to the best method of procedure.

According to the author, the statistics in regard to the average number of persons employed in industrial establishments, the capital invested, and expenses and profits are practically never answered with precision, and have to be used with great caution. It is also stated that of the industrial returns in Massachusetts about 75 per cent are substantially correct, and that the remaining 25 per cent are usually of small establishments, and do not represent more than 10 per cent of the total product. A short but interesting chapter gives an account of the various machines which are in use for calculating, and which thus considerably lighten the work of the statistician. This book should be of service also to the economist and student of statistical reports, for he can there learn much of the difficulties which stand in the way of complete success, and will be greatly aided in interpreting statistics, and in arriving at juster conclusions.

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### THE CENSUS ACT FOR 1890.

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The following is an abstract of the most important provisions of the Act (approved March, 1889) for taking the eleventh and subsequent censuses:

SEC. 1. Provides that the census of population, wealth, and industry shall be taken as of the date June 1, 1890.

SEC. 2. That there shall be established in the Department of the Interior a Census Office, the chief officer of which shall be the Superintendent of Census.

SEC. 3. That the Superintendent of Census shall receive an annual salary of \$6000, and shall employ a certain number of clerks and laborers.

SEC. 4. That by the 1st of March, 1890, there shall be appointed supervisors of census in each state and territory, the number of which shall not exceed 175.